

July 14, 1952

Dear Dr. Lederberg:

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I received the reprints you sent some time ago, and Phyllis said that you must have heard the remark I made when I first read the paper in the Journ. of Bact. (I am a member of the society as of this year). At the time I told Phyll of the procedure which was outlined in the paper and said that you should have thought of it at the time that I was checking fermentation characteristics of mutants. She calmly put me in my place by saying that inasmuch as I was the one that was doing the work that I should have thought of it. Which substantiates the old saying that you can't win an argument with a woman. Anyway, I'm glad that you and Mrs. Lederberg published said paper. At the present time I have some 1500 cultures (and will have more by September) which I have isolated in connection with a study I am doing at the present time. These must be grouped and identified. If I can successfully apply the method of replica plating to the study, and I see little reason why I can't, I will save myself many hours of work. So I thank you both.

How am I? Fine. And so is Phyllis. And Janet, an addition to our family as of March 7 of this year. She is of course the prettiest, best behaved, most intelligent, and best baby in the world, although in saying so I will admit that I am prejudiced. However, Phyll agrees with me.

As you probably gathered from my address, we live a little ways out of town. We have a nice white house, a big garden, a gray tomcat, and two hives of bees. Jack pine surrounds us on the north and west and alfalfa on the east and south. I hunt rabbits in the jack pine and the bees gather nectar from the alfalfa. I gather honey from the bees. A very satisfactory arrangement. I was more or less forced into the beekeeping trade. The fellows I work with suggested (at the time that I first moved up here) that I have a herd of cattle or a flock of chickens or a pheasant farm and many other such hobbies for one living in the country. Finally one suggested bees. I think I agreed out of pure desperation. Now I'd hate to give it up. When you get stung five or six times in the process of checking the hives (a weekly project) you are tempted to invest in a DDT bomb. But when you see the frames and foundation grow into combs and then the empty combs become combs of honey you just smile inside and think about getting another hive. (I had one last year, have two this year). It's sort of like a venereal infection - gains on you insidiously until you can't do anything about it. Enough of bees.

As to my work, could be worse, could be better. It isn't what I had in mind at the time that I was gleaming facts from Jordan and Burroughs. On the other hand I know of those in my class who have jobs that, although satisfactory to them, would certainly make me unhappy. Nevertheless, I'm still looking around. My latest line of vision came to rest with the employment bureau of the society. I was more than proud to state that I had once worked in the laboratory of one Dr. J. Lederberg. And again you were placed on the list of ~~xxxxxxxx~~ references. I certainly hope that you don't mind my referring them to you, and knowing you as I do, I don't think that you do.

You look much the same as you did two years ago. Which implies that I saw your picture in the Milwaukee Journal last Sunday. Hope you enjoyed the ride.

I noticed in one of the Newsletters that I received that Norton's address is still Dept. of Genetics, U of W. Say hello to him for me and tell him to say hello to Marylin. Or Marilyn. I never did learn which way it was spelled. If my memory serves me correctly they should be parents of about a year now. Better than a year.

I have never regretted the hours I spent in your laboratory, Doctor. What I learned there and the friends that I made were as much a part of my education as the hours spent in lectures and classes. There are some things that I think of frequently and smile - like the first day I walked into the basement laboratory. You weren't there and Mrs. Lederberg almost turned me away until I said, "I thought all bacteria reproduce asexually." I learned better soon. And the day I left the lactose out of three liters of EMB agar. And the talk I received from Dr. Irwin the day I tried walking out ~~with~~ of his laboratory with a jug of distilled water without asking. Then there are bits of knowledge I use every day - sometimes I realize I learned them in your laboratory, others I'm afraid you never get credit for.

So thanks for everything, and let me hear from you when you find time to write. And say hello to Mrs. Lederberg for me.

Sincerely,

Don

Erndon